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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3193  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8245  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0551  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JUN LIMA 6269  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 1863  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6937

UNCLAS BOGOTA 002173

SIPDIS

WHA/EPSC FOR ZSYED

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ELTN](#) [ENRG](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: BRIEF TRUCKERS' STRIKE OVER RISING COSTS RESOLVED

REF: BOGOTA 2053

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: A 22-hour strike by 145,000 Colombian truckers ended June 16 after industry representatives reached agreement with President Uribe on credits for the sector to replace aging vehicles and revamp regulations on shipping fees and rules. Trucking representatives said they resorted to calling a strike after rising fuel costs made already difficult industry conditions untenable. The strike caused only minimal delays at Buenaventura port and there were no reports of violence. Normal operations are expected to resume June 17. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Squeezed by unregulated trucks, high toll and fee costs, and now rising fuel costs, Colombia's Trucking Association (ACC) called a nationwide strike of its 145,000 members at midnight on June 15. ACC said approximately 60 percent of its members participated in the strike. Following a four-hour meeting between senior ACC representatives and President Uribe on June 16, the ACC called off the strike.

¶3. (U) In the meeting with President Uribe the GOC agreed to provide low cost financing to retire 5,000 aging trucks, new rules to combat overweight vehicles, and a grace period on foreclosure of indebted trucking firms. President Uribe also agreed to issue a decree reaffirming minimum shipping fees and establishing a electronic registry system to assure shipping agents do not contract unregulated trucks. While the truckers pressed for relief on fuel prices through a revision of the existing diesel subsidy or a reduction in the value-added tax on fuel, the GOC announced no such measures.

¶4. (U) GOC transportation and port officials told us that the short-lived strike resulted in relatively minor delays at Buenaventura port and no interruption of normal service in the Cartagena, Barranquilla or Santa Marta ports. (NOTE: A 17-day transport strike in 2004 cost the Colombian economy over USD 70 million. END NOTE) ACC and GOC officials agreed that all trucking operations should return to normal June 17. There were no reports of violence associated with the strike.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Although resolved quickly with minimal economic disruption, the decision by Colombian truckers to strike reflects the growing pressure less competitive industries feel from external factors such as higher fuel costs and the appreciation of the peso (reftel). with no end in sight to external cost pressures for shipping and other sectors, more sector-specific strikes may arise soon.  
BROWNFIELD